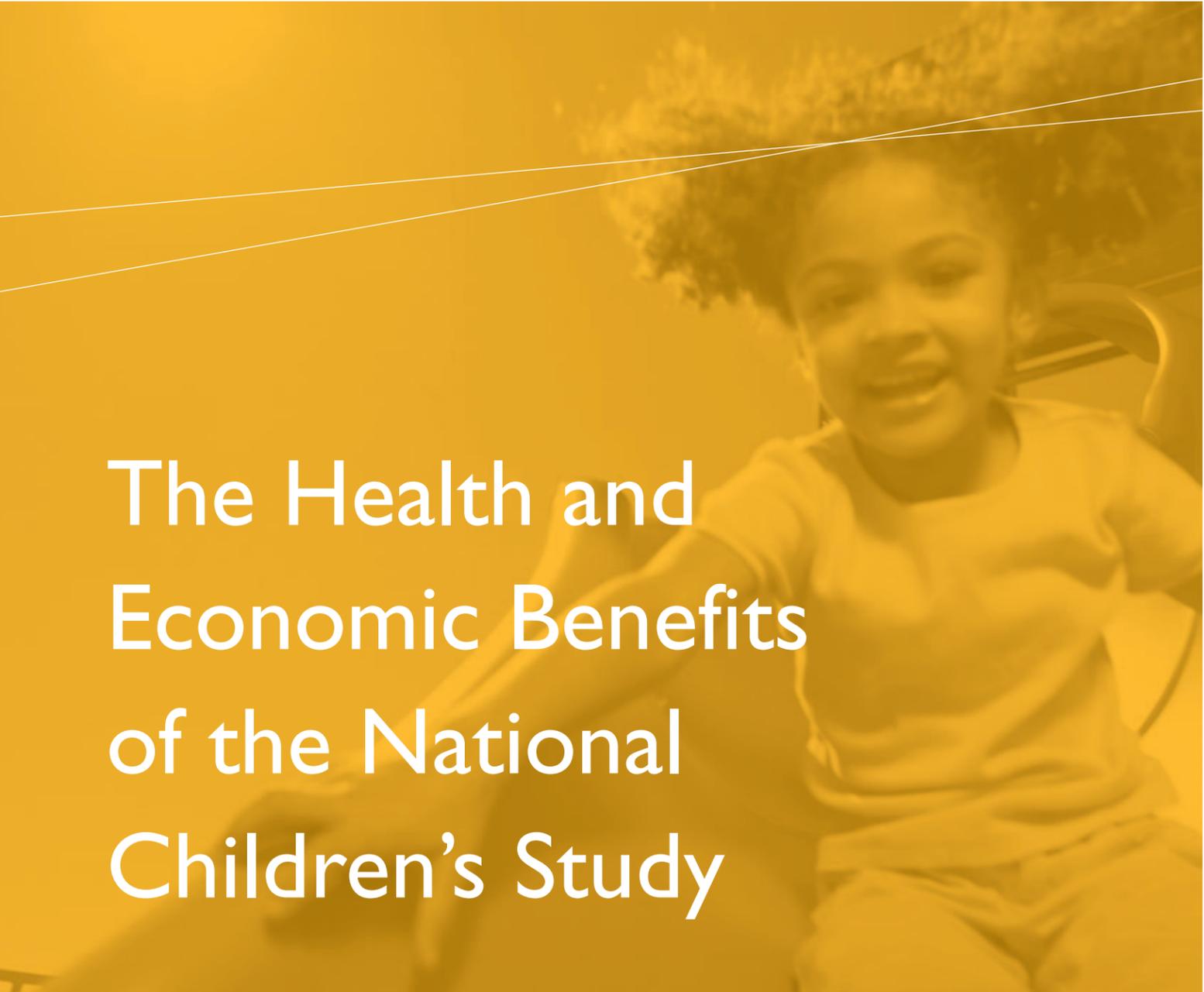


EXPRESSING THE VISION FOR THE NATIONAL CHILDREN'S STUDY





The Health and Economic Benefits of the National Children's Study

America faces critical health issues on many fronts. Across an array of disorders and diseases, often seen first in children and affecting their lives into adulthood, the nation's scientists, physicians, parents, policy makers, and concerned citizens are supporting a call to action: more research, better research, reliable outcomes, and substantive results.

The health and medical burdens we face are complex and widespread. We know, for example, that children bear an increased vulnerability to various types of exposures; that they are not simply "small adults"; and that they do not have the same immune protection or detoxification capacities as adults. And, because they are children, they have little or no ability to protect themselves in abuse or neglect situations.

The urgency and significance of the challenges to child health are clear, but there are scientific barriers to address. Much of the evidence to date establishes links between specific exposures and specific outcomes. And even though many of these relationships are undeniable, considerable work remains to understand the subtle molecular and genetic mechanisms involved.

The lessons of the Framingham Heart Study, the Bogalusa Heart Study, and the Nurse's Health Study, among others, demonstrate the benefits of broad-based, long-term multiple-question health studies. The health and economic benefits of the National Children's Study—realized through reduced illness and disability, as well as through increased school and work productivity—will profit the nation well beyond the investment of creating and maintaining the Study.

With its emphasis on multiple environmental exposures and health outcomes across more than two decades, the National Children's Study will combine scientific efficiency with cost-effectiveness. Evaluating data exposures in relation to genetic predispositions to health and disease among

100,000 participating children will help create a more complete picture of what actually causes diseases and promotes health. Although it cannot promise to prevent or treat every child health problem, the National Children's Study will provide a data repository from which new preventions and treatments can be developed for some of today's most common health disorders.

I am convinced that this study, if successful, will be remembered for years to come as one of the most important scientific enterprises ever started regarding children's health.

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REFERENCES